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ECNS 450.01: Advanced Topics in Economic Development

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Economics 450 – Advanced Topics in Economic Development – Spring 2014

Professor Jeff Bookwalter

MWF 12:10-1:00, FOR 305

Office, phone LA 404, 243-4667
and email: jeff.bookwalter@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours: MW 1:10-2:10, T 12:30-1:30 If those times are not convenient, drop by or make an appointment.

Course Numerous readings available as PDF files on the course website:
materials: <http://www.cas.umt.edu/econ/ecns450.php>

General Description: The Advanced Topics in Economic Development has several objectives. First, the course is about applying your years of economic training to a wide variety of topics. To this end, we will read and discuss modern economic literature in the field of economic development. A majority of examples and readings will be drawn from sub-Saharan Africa. This is in part to narrow the breadth of the course and in part because it is my area of expertise.

As you all know, courses are dull when no one other than the instructor has read the material and has anything to contribute. Read all materials before class and come ready to participate.

Getting the grade you want: Each student must attend (and write up a one page synopsis and response to) two relevant events on economics, broadly defined. These activities might include approved brown-bag discussions, evening lectures, films and others. I will keep you informed of relevant events and their dates as they are scheduled. Please let me know if you come across things that seem relevant and I can announce those as well. Better write-ups will demonstrate the ability to take economic theory and practice and apply them to the topic at hand.

There will be six unannounced quizzes. They will be short – in the neighborhood of 15 minutes – and the format will vary. Generally quizzes will cover material meant to be discussed that day or week. So consider the quizzes an added incentive to spend time with the readings prior to class.

In randomly chosen groups of two or three, students will lead the discussion on the topic of the week. Please see separate description for details.

The largest part of this course is showing up and actively participating in the discussion. For every three unexcused absences, your final letter grade will fall by one half grade (from a B+ to a B, for example). It is not enough to simply attend. You need to demonstrate that you know and understand the materials and contribute to class understanding. At the end of each class day, I assign each student a grade for their contribution. From lowest to highest the ratings are: Unexcused Absence, Excused Absence, Present with no contribution, Minimal Contribution, Normal Contribution, and Excellent Contribution. To get a sense of the evaluation scale, a normal contribution would be adding to the discussion in a way that demonstrates that you have read the required material and are able to take that knowledge and contribute to the class understanding.

Email List and Website: Each student at UM is automatically assigned an email address in the following format: firstname.lastname@umontana.edu. I will use these email addresses regularly to send out current events readings, make class announcements, provide evaluations of your work and for other things as the need arises. There is a course website where readings, assignments and announcements will be posted:

<http://www.cas.umt.edu/econ/ecns450.php>

Exams: There are a total of four exams. All will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and problems. The final exam is comprehensive but only includes material that appeared on the first three exams.

Except for documented emergencies or University excused absences, make-up exams are not given.

You total exam score will be the average of your three highest exam grades. In practice, that means if you have taken all the exams and are satisfied with your grade after the last one, you do not need to take the comprehensive final. It also means that if you miss one of the first three exams, the final exam is mandatory.

Exam 1	Friday, March 7 th
Exam 2	Friday, April 11 th
Exam 3	Wednesday, May 9 th
Final Exam	Tuesday, May 13 th , 10:10-12:10

Grading:

Out of Class Assignments and Quizzes	20 percent
Attendance and Participation	40 percent
Exams	<u>40 percent</u>
Total	100 percent

Students with Disabilities: This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the modification process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

A Word on Cheating and Plagiarism: Please do not do cheat. Chances are you'd get away with it, but if you don't the consequences are dire. All students are expected to abide by the University of Montana Student Conduct Code. Any violators of the Student Code of Conduct will be subject to punishment as outlined in the Student Code. For more information on the Student Code of Conduct please consult the following website: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php

Econ 494 – Spring 2013 – Graded Assignments

Topic Assignments

I've chosen a number of economic development topics to form the basis of the material we will read and discuss this semester. Here is the basic assignment. Each week we will focus on one topic. I will choose one or two articles on the topic for the class to read. The group assigned to that particular topic will choose one or two other articles. The articles will form the basis for discussion that week.

For example, in the third week of class, we will look evaluating development using happiness and life satisfaction data. All of us will read:

Richard Easterlin, "Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?" and, Rafael DiTella and Robert McCullough, "Gross National Happiness as an Answer to the Easterlin Paradox?"

The group assigned to this topic will choose one other article. At least 10 days before we start the discussion (with the obvious exception of the first set of readings), the group will submit at least three substantial journal articles to me. The group and I will choose one or two of them and once approved, I will post them on the class website. Everyone needs to have read and understood and thought about them before class. Given the depth and breadth of all of the topics we cover, I'm happy to help groups narrow or choose good articles.

Here are some guidelines for choosing good articles. Pick articles that are accessible to most of your classmates and avoid the most technical or theoretical. All senior economics majors should be able to read and mostly understand empirical articles. Do not choose articles from the *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*. These articles are too short to provide much discussion. Articles in the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* or the *Journal of Economic Literature*, while usually fairly long, are not overly technical and often generate good discussion.

In addition to choosing articles, it is the group's responsibility to facilitate a good discussion. I'd recommend (but not require) that you put together some questions you'd like people to think about as they read. In addition, groups have at times successfully used video or audio resources to help the discussion along.

Study Question Assignments

Due Date: The Wednesday following the last day you led the discussion of the economic development topic

In your group, come up with 5 potential essay questions that might arise from your readings and subsequent class discussion. Make sure the questions require having read and understood the relevant papers. Each person in the group is responsible for answering one of the questions in detail. Make sure that they are broad enough to require some knowledge beyond what is contained in the specified readings. The answer should be at least one single-spaced page. If you can't fill a page, it's not a good question.

They need to be submitted in two ways. First, choose one member of your group and merge the five questions and answers into a single Word file using the same fonts, margins, etc. Email me the file so I can merge all the material and circulate. Second, each person should hand in a hard copy of the single question they answered so that I can grade and return it.

Tentative Class Schedule

	Topic	Readings
Week 1: Starting 1/27	Class Organization Intro to Articles	
Week 2: Starting 2/3	What is Development?	Amartya Sen, "The Concept of Development" UNDP, 1990 Human Development Report, Chapters 1 and 2.
Week 3: Starting 2/10	Life Satisfaction and Happiness	Richard Easterlin, "Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?" DiTella and MacCulloch, "Gross National Happiness as an Answer to the Easterlin Paradox"
Week 4: Starting 2/17	Economic Growth and Convergence President's Day Holiday	Lant Pritchett, "Divergence, Big Time" Moses Abromovitz, "Catching up..."
Week 5: Starting 2/24	Historical Legacies	Nathan Nunn, "The Importance of History for Economic Development"
Week 6: Starting 3/3	Growth, Endowments and Geography Exam 1 – Friday, March 7th	Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson. "Understanding Prosperity and Poverty: Geography, Institutions, and the Reversal of Fortune"
Week 7: Starting 3/10	Methods: RCTs and Instruments	Banerjee and Duflo, "The Experimental Approach to Development Economics"
Week 8: Starting 3/17	Barriers to Development: Corruption	Svensson (2005) "Eight Questions about Corruption" Fisman and Edward Miguel, "Cultures of Corruption: Evidence from Diplomatic Parking Tickets,"
Week 9: Starting 3/24	Barriers to Development: Civil War	Miguel and Blattman (2010) "Civil War"
Week 10: Starting 3/31	Spring Break – No Classes	
Week 11: Starting 4/7	Development Aid Exam 2 – Friday, April 11th	Easterly and Pfutze, "Where does the Money Go?" Collier, "Aid to the Rescue" Chapter 7, <i>The Bottom Billion</i>
Week 12: Starting 4/14	Human Capital and Education	Glewwe and Kremer, "Schools, Teachers and Education Outcomes in Developing Countries"
Week 13: Starting 4/21	Human Capital and Health	
Week 14: Starting 4/28	Environment and Development	Fullerton and Stavins (1998) "How Economists See The Environment" <i>Science</i>
Week 15: Starting 5/5	Catch-up and Review Days Exam 3 – Wednesday, May 9th	
Week 16: Starting 5/12	Final Exam	Tuesday, May 13, 10:10-12:10